

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

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461 It is not claimed that these figures are anything but approximate, but they at least bring out the proportionate amount of work and show clearly the labour that can be undertaken by children in this agrarian community. [883] They reveal that a 13-year-old boy can contribute to almost two-thirds of the actual labour in the cultivation of the land (his solo contribution for the winter crop being 440 hours out of 720; and 536 hours out of 888 hours for the summer crop).

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464 One can assess from the approximate figures the paramount importance of children as a non-salaried essential in the labour-force, especially in a community where hired labour is extremely difficult to get. Moreover, it is not difficult to appreciate the maxim that an early son is of great service. It is a part of filial piety for a son to be expected to perform all that is within his capacity to relieve his father.¹ [519] Thus from the economic point of view, a child's process of growing up connotes his father's gradual relinquishing of all the farm tasks he has been carrying out hitherto. One of the ideals of family life is for the children to do the things their parents have been doing before, as he who resembles his father has committed no injustice. This criterion is one of the elements involved in describing a boy or a girl as 'muaddab' or 'muaddabah'—disciplined. If the father has grown-up children to rely upon for work, this would certainly enhance his social prestige, being able through more leisure to participate fully in the social events, mediations and informal gatherings as he can afford the time for them. [554]

Children are thus considered to be leisure-giving to their parents; since a leisurely father is one who is not hard-pressed by work and usually designated as 'sheikh arab'. Yet sons sometimes resent the excessive indulgence of their fathers in this privilege, when they feel that they themselves are overworked, or when incited by their in-laws or 'pals' that they are working like a donkey while father is acting like 'a great arab sheikh, enjoying the shade and the councils'. In some cases, this might lead to son and father friction, which might result in the former quitting the village.

464 A few people in the village have land, but no sons. In connection with this, Ali remarked that this is one of the ways in which God tested his creatures, by not letting them have both land and sons. Such people have to get permanent hired labour for the cultivation of their land; and these are euphemistically dubbed 'participants'. The owner provides the animals, implements, and seeds for work, while the participants provide the labour, [465] receiving in return a quarter of the crop. Sometimes a part of the land is let to a person, the owner having nothing to do with it, but receiving one-third, or sometimes one-half, of the total crop besides paying the tax. 427

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554 The economic contribution of boys applies equally to girls in connection with the household work. Girls are expected to co-operate with mothers in domestic tasks, and, as they grow older, to be increasingly able to relieve their mothers so that the latter can widen their social activities and

¹ See in this connection children's statements in the *Moral Ideology Test*, Appendix IX.

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enjoy the pleasure and prestige of 'mothers of children'. Thus in the same way, the girl, in relation to her mother, is not only considered as an economic asset but a means for getting more leisure and freedom from the pressure of work.

It is appropriate here to state the various activities which both boys and girls are expected to perform. Age and physical fitness determine the various tasks allotted to them.

In the case of boys, farm work is divided into three main categories, according to their ability to perform those duties independently. In the first stage, from seven to ten years, the boy is called 'hawwal', meaning that he can direct the water into the farm sections and is able to regulate by himself the process of irrigation. Twenty years ago, when the village was under basin irrigation, boys who used to attend to the turning of the water-wheel were called 'jaizar', but as there are very few water-wheels nowadays, this word is not commonly used in connection with this stage. Compulsory schooling for those who cannot evade it has made this job a part-time one.

From the age of twelve or thirteen boys are expected to undertake the conveying of fertilizer from the hills, and they are called at this stage 'marraga'—the bringers of 'marog'. They are trained by the age group that is immediately above them. A boy on his first 'hill ascent' to get the 'marog' must give the older boys with whom he is to be associated a present of wheat, bread and dates. If he does not fulfil this obligation, they usually, on their arrival at the 'marog' spot, undo the camel's reins and put them round the boy's face and neck, returning the camel empty to the boy's field. After fulfilling his obligation, they take him with them, and help him to learn the techniques of loading the camel and discovering the best kind of 'marog'.

At this stage also a boy starts tackling the 'shadoof' or as more commonly called in this district the 'ood'. If he can manipulate this instrument properly the boy is called 'awwad'. It is well established that a 'marrag' or an 'awwad' is almost synonymous to a good eater, and his request for food and the increase of frequency of meals and their quantity are usually complied with, as a recognition of his tangible economic contribution.

The third stage sets in by the appearance of the first traces of the boy's moustache, when he becomes a fully-fledged farmer, 'nabbar' or a 'fellah', from the age of seventeen onwards. The hallmark of this stage is for the boy to be allowed to sow the seeds, and to distribute fertilizer on the farm, as these are supposed to be the most skilful tasks in agriculture.

These three economic stages coincide almost with the three categories of the social grouping in the village, namely the group of youngsters, adolescents or non-married men, and fully-fledged men. One of the important qualifications for a grown-up marriageable youth is his ability to perform the various stages of cultivation, graduating, as it were, by becoming a competent farmer, able to sow the seeds and distribute the fertilizer.

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[342] and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of
183 storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each
291 sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very
important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is
'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet
all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences
are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—
'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same
[622] type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than
his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of
[554] furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The
villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthen-
ing this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members
of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties
and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst
Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

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464 With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly
considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the
labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure.
With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible
labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for
although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the
family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with
leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling
with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contribu-
tions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual
help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific
tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

423 It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain
in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether
the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the
'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that
distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of
5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were
owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to
2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and
were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of
plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1.5 per cent of the total number of
landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.¹

[656] This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal
Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such mal-
distribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign
of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

¹ See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in
L'Egypte Contemporaine, 1939.

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due to the fact that there is no formal ceremony for the naming in Artas, 553
as in Silwa, and hence the change is easier.

Since the enforcement of registration of births about forty years ago, 656
the child is registered after the ceremony. It is to be remembered that
still-births are not registered, and are never buried in the cemetery, but 845
always below the threshold of the house.

The mother takes no active part in all the ceremony activities, as she
is not allowed to move from her room of confinement until forty days have 846
elapsed. As mentioned earlier, the child is considered to be guarded
throughout this period by the angels, who talk to him, entertain him, and 846
sometimes tease or even annoy him. This is the explanation of the baby's
occasional smiles, as well as cries. He smiles because the angels have told 847
him that his father is alive, and cries when they inform him that his father
has died.

By the end of the forty days, the mother finishes her period of confine-
ment and is considered to be in full control of the baby. She can move
about with him and resume her ordinary domestic tasks as she becomes
ceremonially clean after having her first bath, a kind of ritual cleansing. 848

The end of this confinement means the gradual introduction of the 846
child to the wider family circles by taking it on visits to relatives or then
visiting the house with presents. If the mother takes the child to any house, 847
the child is never expected to leave empty-handed. Whether near or
distant relatives, or of no blood connection at all, they always give the
child presents varying from salt, dates, a loaf of bread, an egg, to money
and more valuable things. On the birth of the first child the paternal
grandfather cannot see his grandson without sending a ram or a goat
before his arrival. 848

Another step is the introduction of the newly-born boy to the other boys 851
in the neighbourhood. For this purpose the mother prepares a dish of
boiled maize or wheat and sugar, called 'balila', and taking her child, 846
accompanied by the children of the neighbourhood, repairs to some
elevated land to eat the food. For this occasion the mother dresses in new
scented clothes. For the first time also, the child wears new clothes, con-
sisting of a white undergarment covered by a striped one, thus discarding
his mother's or father's old wrappings. 858

It is socially encouraged that both a woman and a man should give rein 842
to their intense desire for children. The main function of marriage is to
have children and thus perpetuate family life. This shows itself in one of
the consolatory phrases addressed to any offspring on the occasion of their 843
father's death: 'He who has left successors is not dead.' My informant,
Ali, said, 'A childless couple will have no "successors" to read the
"Fatiha" for their souls after their death and their name will thus end by
their departure from this world. Children are really useful, not only in
this world but in the world hereafter. The Prophet (on whom be the peace
and blessings of God) said, "Get married and multiply, as I shall take 844

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858 pride in the number of my followers in comparison with those of other
842 nations". If sons and daughters behave uprightly they will act as a means
[783] of redeeming the parents' sin. Any good action by the child, e.g. giving
alms, helping the weak, digging a well, would also benefit the parents.
Parents who have left unworthy children have left "dust" behind.'

858 My informant went on to say: 'Children are the glory of this world, as
799 the Koran says "Money and children are the joy of this life". Another
statement of the Koran says: "God give us a good thing in this world and
a good thing in the next world". The Koran interpreters consider that,
in this context, "the good thing of this world" implies children. Children
are also referred to as sowing seeds, as it is through these seeds that the
corn reproduces itself.'

593 As for the wife, she attains her proper status only as a mother, and a
554 childless woman is in an insecure position, as her husband is socially
[595] justified in remarrying, to have children. For a newly-married couple to
have a child is a step towards partaking of some individuality in the larger
family circle. The wife is referred to as 'mother of the children' and when-
ever a man is asked about his wife, she is frequently referred to also as the
'mother of the first-born boy' and the same applies also to the father, and
this reference is more common in public gatherings.

842 My informant, Mahmoud, told me that there were ten childless women
in the village and that they were therefore known by everybody. Out of
these ten, two were living with husbands who had taken a second wife.
He continued, 'A childless woman is usually like a she-camel who does not
conceive, puts on more and more flesh, and gets younger every day—but
not fruitful, as she can never "lengthen" her husband's neck amongst the
menfolk. She is a sore eye to her family. The proper woman is the one who
[156] is an "envelope for conception". It is not strange, then, that a fat woman
[826] is a desirable ideal, as she has more room to bear the child, lactates
abundantly and gives more warmth to her children.

It is appropriate here to discuss the differential value of boys and girls
858 in Silwa. The importance of the boys' work in the fields as a major con-
593 tribution to the family's means of subsistence was discussed earlier. More-
562 over, the boys are considered to be the best capital investment for ageing
parents. They are expected to form the basis for social and economic
[736] security, not only for their parents, but also for any widowed sisters. This
[730] duty to support their parents or those female relatives who have no other
man to support them is legally enforced by the religious courts. This
question gives rise to endless disputes; one hears of parents suing their
children for support according to their means, or at least threatening to
sue them. No such obligations devolve on the daughters, as they are wives
of their husbands, and no claim can be made against them.

554 Boys are also an added qualification for social prestige. A man with
542 more sons backing him up can always speak with more authority and ranks
high in the community's esteem even if he owns less land. Fathers who have

*Chapter Five*THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

IN this chapter the main characteristics and events of childhood affecting both the social and psychological aspects of the individual's personality in Silwa are to be discussed. Infancy, with which we dealt in the last chapter, is regarded as the three or four years of the person's life at the end of which, whatever the family and individual variations may be, the infant is weaned, begins to talk and responds to adult commands. The following years are those of childhood until the age of twelve or thirteen, when the boy or the girl, at puberty, enters the adolescent stage. 121

In our consideration of the process of 'growing up' of children, there is hardly need to stress the fact that the process is not identical for all children. It is beyond any question that there are certain forces and conditions that bring about 'the distinctive personality constellations', e.g. the death of a sibling older or younger, loss of a mother, a father, state of child's health, child's birth order, age of parents at the time of child's birth.¹ These distinctive factors with their concomitant individual differences are recognized by the villagers. A child may be referred to as a 'child of old parents' (waldat 'ajayiz) and is usually characterized by being precocious in his development, or a 'child brought forth in the years of plenty or in the lean years', the former possessing easy and happy disposition, while the latter is expected to be nagging and irritable. In the next two chapters, however, the common prevailing forces that leave their impact on the personality development of the village children are discussed. [858]

One of the main characteristics of this period of childhood is the pressure of sibling rivalry which is socially recognized, being evidenced in certain symbolic forms of wear, folk-lore, and symptoms of sickness. Sibling rivalry, however, is not peculiar to the child's growing up in Silwa, but, as demonstrated by Levy's projective doll-playing tests, 'represents a 865
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¹ Clyde Kluckhohn, 'Personality Formation among the Navaho Indians', in *Sociometry*, Vol. IX, 1946, pp. 130-1.

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 as the terminal baby, or, as it is sometimes
 called, the 'last of the bunch', has no rival, it is usually suckled longer and
 is considered to be more demanding, thus requiring more protection and
 pampering since its natural growth is not assisted by the stimulus of
 rivalry. It is true that the last-born child in a family is regarded as spoilt,
 and in normal social life this fact could be used by others to account for
 its shortcomings. 865 858

It is also acknowledged that the youngest child becomes jealous im-
 mediately his mother's abdomen becomes enlarged on pregnancy and he
 is usually told of the forthcoming event. The mother hums phrases expres-
 sing her sympathy with the child's jealousy and anxiety in store for him.
 The custom, though not so common now as it was twenty years ago, is for
 the older child after the birth of a new baby to wear round its neck one,
 two, or three cubes of sulphur called cubes of jealousy, wrapped in a piece
 of leather. This is supposed to minimize the dangers of excessive jealousy,
 as although jealousy is a healthy drive for growth, its excess might have
 ill effects on the child. It could induce diarrhoea, swellings, lack of appetite,
 temper tantrums, and sleeplessness.¹ 865 593 152 [151]

Such symptoms of illness caused by jealousy are diagnosed, and a tradi-
 tional cure is administered by the mother, grandmother or an experienced
 old woman. The cure is called 'kurfa', which literally means something
 that dispels aggressiveness and sulkiness. The 'kurfa' consists of an egg
 fried in oil with garlic and spices which is given to the child to eat, usually
 when his suckling sibling is asleep. Now the jealous child is in complete
 possession of his mother's attention; she feeds him on the 'kurfa', while
 he sits on her lap. He is told of how 'awful' his sibling is, and how 'nice
 and grown-up' he himself looks. After finishing his egg, the child's body is
 rubbed with the same cooking oil to ease the tensions of envy in his body.
 These titbits of food represent the few instances in which the knee-baby
 is allowed to recapture fully his mother's love and to dethrone his younger
 sibling. It is a symbolic acceptance of a break in the normal behaviour of
 the knee-baby, rewarded by regressive gratification. This 'kurfa' meal is
 a propitiatory means of enabling the older child to withstand the strains
 of sibling rivalry, and to accept the newborn baby with whom he has to
 identify himself later, either by looking after it or by taking it out to play.
 Such propitiation becomes more significant in the process of growing up
 when it is realized that the child is not allowed to manifest his anxiety
 over, or his deprivation from, his mother on pain of punishment. Such
 states of temper, tantrums or sulkiness are sometimes dealt with by the
 mother pretending to strike the younger baby who is the cause of the
 child's troubles. The great deal of roughness and aggression displayed in
 children's play outside the home could be considered as a cultural outlet
 for some of their repressed hostility towards their siblings and parents. 865 593 152 755 [154]

¹ 'Swelling and outbursting' are used figuratively in the villagers' language to denote
 jealousy. Especially in women's altercations, one hears the phrase, 'You have a swelling
 from me', meaning 'you are jealous'. [195]

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high-pressure ego development. The sense of importance and worthiness is continually hammered into the children's minds through comparing them with either their sibling or other children.¹ It is no exaggeration to say that competitiveness in Silwa receives its first stimulus from sibling relationships, and is expressed in the popular saying that 'children who come on top of one another cannot get along with each other'. Siblings of different ages are expected to play in different age groups, especially after the age of six or seven. Although there is no institutionalized favouritism for the first son with regard to inheritance, for example, he is usually the most welcome member of the family as in his later life he will be his father's representative. It is no accident, then, that the first-born son receives more attention, as is usually expressed in his ceremonies of naming, circumcision, and wedding. 865 593 [86] 857 858

Together with this sibling relationship envisaged in a series of children chasing each other, one can hardly fail to note the difference of treatment between boys and girls in general. These disparities between the treatment of the two sexes are not mainly based on the superiority of the male sex or the female, but are largely founded on the relevance of the two sexes to the perpetuation of the family name and their respective economic activities.² The popular saying goes to the effect that the daughter's son should not receive much attention from his grandfather as such attention is wasted. However, it does not unduly worry parents in any way if their daughters do not show behaviour indications of rivalry during childhood. It will become clearer, as we proceed, that girls only enjoy relative indulgence during infancy, especially with regard to their comparatively longer period of suckling. But from childhood onwards they are expected to approach sociological adulthood more quickly than the boys.³ [865]

The second characteristic of the period of childhood is connected with the decreasing amount of care and attention given to the child by its mother. This is evidenced by the children's appearance during this stage of development. They are less clean in body and clothes, and it is not an unusual sight to find nasal mucus on children's faces. Mothers justify this neglect on the grounds that the child at this stage, where he is usually out with other children and thus exposed to the public, should not appear attractive for fear of the evil eye. This lack of interest in children's appearance usually continues until the age of nine, ten or eleven. Thereafter an unkempt or shabby child would be a disgrace to his parents. The renewed interest, especially in the child's clothes, after the age of ten, is related also to the need for covering the organs of reproduction by wearing [855] [15A] [891] [882]

¹ For concrete statements of children concerning sibling rivalry, see Appendix VIII, 'Stewart Emotional Response Test', and Appendix X, 'Story Completion Test'.

² See Chapter I.

³ It is assumed here that rivalry is socially inherited and is passed on from parents to their children. 'A mother through her attitude continues the old battle, and in the competitive struggles of her children she relives the competitive struggles of her childhood.' R. H. Hilgard, 'Sibling Rivalry and Social Heredity', in *Psychiatry*, Vol. 14, 1951. [865]

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play group as a relative, or warned against joining them on the grounds of their being strangers. 851
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Furthermore an age group can only extend itself, though not freely or without reserve, to the age group directly senior to it.¹ In other words, boys, for example, may be seen playing or sitting with adolescents or young unmarried men, but are not expected to mix with grown-up men. Adolescents and young men may also be seen sitting on the fringe of an adult gathering, though very infrequently. At night a man may be chatting with a group of older boys, but always sitting on the fringe of their gathering, as an indication of his aloofness. Such behaviour related to the three age groups in the village is expressed in the admonition that one 'should not exceed the limits in his behaviour'. For example, a boy who passes by a gathering of adults sprawling on the ground is not supposed to greet them, much less pass between them. Rikabi, a boy of twelve years, approached a meeting of neighbours near his home, and greeted them by saying 'Peace be upon you'. This action annoyed his father as well as the others, and provoked the father to reply: 'Go away, may peace crush you.' In this case, the boy was trying to act like a grown-up, but such precociousness is not the accepted behaviour from a boy of his age. Had he been seventeen or eighteen years his greetings would have been accepted and considered praiseworthy. 561
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Terms of courtesy are not expected among the children themselves and avoidance is the best way of showing courtesy between adults and children. With the impact of urban life, polite children are expected to say 'Thank you' or 'May God increase your blessings' to their elders, while the latter seldom show their appreciation of the children's assistance for them, which if ever expressed would be couched in kinship terms such as 'May God increase thy blessings; thou art the master of thy uncle'. 576
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The fourth characteristic of this period of childhood is the striking interest and respect of children for food. It is quite frequent to see boys and girls inside or outside the house holding in their hands a piece of bread or an onion and eating it while they play. They may be also seen tantalizing each other by the type of bread they have, priding themselves on their mother's good baking. Children, on the whole, tend to be preoccupied and interested in food. This shows itself in the children's ordinary conversation, in the amount of details they give in relating a folk story with food themes occurring in it, in their excessive delight in telling about a good meal that they had or that they are going to have. Feasts and ceremonies are first recalled as occasions for excessive good food. Even in both adults' and children's dreams, food is an important element in their manifest content.² Children prefer certain relatives to others because they offer them food and tea; they share food with those children whom they like and refuse to share it with those whom they dislike. 862

¹ See Chapter II for the three age groups in the village.

² See Appendix XI, 'A Note on Dreams', and Appendices VIII and X.

Chapter Six

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

IN this chapter it is intended to outline the procedures and methods that are adopted in this community to inculcate the norms that transform the child, who is relatively peripheral, into the adult who is the central link in village social life. The transition can be considered, as Fortes puts it, as one 'from an economically passive burden into a producer, from a biological unit into a social personality, irretrievably cast in the habits, disposition, and notions characteristic of his culture'.¹ Fortes has also provided the writer with certain insight in evaluating the learning process as a by-product of the cultural routine, a phenomenon which obtains in the village community. It is obvious that in Silwa the education of children is not surrounded, as in some primitive societies, with ceremonies of initiation, elaborate ritual, or narration of totemic myths. Learning accrues mainly through children's observing, imitating and assisting their adults in their everyday activities. For the villagers express the educational process through emphasizing life and time as the most important educational agencies which mould and influence the character, and provide the experience. The difference between an adult and a child is, on the whole, quantitative rather than qualitative. The former knows and thus conforms to the cultural norms, while the latter does not. The commonly used word is not the classical word 'tiff' (infant) but another word which is also classical but literally means 'ignorant' (jahil)—and thus identifies ignorance with childhood. It is because of this ignorance of expected skills, norms and attitudes that the children are considered inferior to the adult, and the younger as subservient to the elder. 858 ●

Here socialization is to include its two aspects of technical training and cultural or regulatory training.² In Chapter I it was shown how a boy or a girl is progressively introduced to the economic pursuits of adults, and what skills were expected of them at successive stages of their growth. It was also emphasized how the child was expected to take over from his 121 868

¹ M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taland, p. 6.*

² See Introduction.

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[858] father or his elder brother (or mother or elder sister) those tasks which he or she is capable of doing. The child must work for his family as a necessary requisite to enjoying their protection. This is made explicit to children by parents who, on seeing their negligent children enjoying their food, would rebuke them by saying, 'Yes, you only know how to eat and drink', or 'You know how to increase the size of your buttocks'. There is nothing to add here concerning technical training, and further reference will be made in connection with its relation to cultural training. The lack of mastery in skills required from boys at a particular age is attributed to inefficient training by the parents. Once in the fields I heard a father blaming his son for his inability to get the right fodder for the cow by saying, 'The fault is not yours; it is the fault of him who has brought you up'.

867 The process of growing up is envisaged as a way of disciplining the child to conform to the adults' standards, and to comply with what their elders expect them to do, thus acquiring the qualities of being polite—'muaddab'. In adult eyes, the period of childhood is a nuisance, and childhood activities, especially play, are a waste of time. The 'giving of adab' to children is the guarantee of the survival of the social structure, with its patrilineal bias and respect relationships, especially filial piety, which is sanctioned by the Koranic injunctions. To become 'muaddab' is the ideal set up by parents for their children, and the adherence to which is constantly impressed upon them. The ideal, although emphasizing subservience and obedience of the children to their parents, is actually extended to include the whole range of children's activities for which their elders are responsible. The adult sense of keenness to bring their children to realize this ideal can be traced in parents' prayers that God might not make their children disobedient or cause them shame. One of the most effective insults to a boy or a girl is the provoking remark that he or she has no people to discipline him or her. 'She is a divorced girl' or 'unrestrained'; or for a boy, 'he is a pushing boy' (literally 'ascending'). Such comments are addressed to young persons who show no respect to people of their parents' age or who transgress the limits of behaviour expected from their age or sex group, e.g. a boy walking through a gathering of men, a married man insulting his father, a girl shouting from the roof of the house while fetching fuel, or a girl caught entering the guest house.¹

The acquiring of the procedures of 'adab', which incorporate the prescribed standards of behaviour, has also a religious sanction behind it from the prophetic tradition. It is related that the Prophet said, 'God has disciplined me, and has perfected my discipline'. The word 'muaddab' is applied to a child who defaecates outside the house at the age of three or four, and goes further and further away from the house as he grows older. After the age of ten, for instance, he is not considered 'muaddab' unless he covers his genitals while urinating. A boy of fourteen to sixteen would be 'muaddab' if he played in the evenings only, and still better, if

[962] ¹ Use of the guest house is restricted to males.

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and this contributes in no small way to the satisfaction of the individual's psychological need for social recognition.¹ These are some of the forces the writer regards as maintaining some sort of healthy effect in the growing up of children in Silwa; otherwise the strain of childhood would have been unbearable in a predominantly authoritarian community where the child is regarded as its father's possession. Erich Fromm would consider such a community as thwarting the child's legitimate strivings for freedom, independence, and self-fulfilment. He maintains that the social arrangement of an authoritarian patriarchal society, frustrating man's wishes to self-realization, tends to create in him a destructive passion, which in turn must be suppressed by external or internal force.²

If one thinks of the disciplinary policies of childhood in terms of a straight line, at one end of which is the easy-going discipline of some primitive societies, and at the other end the harsh discipline of a society like the Japanese, it is apparent that the type of discipline to be found in Silwa is closer to that of the Japanese society than to that of those primitive societies. [m]

The period of childhood is considered by the adult as an unimportant stage which should be quickly passed over. The writer seldom noticed grown-ups talking about their childhood, and his informants found it very difficult, even unbecoming, to recall their childhood days. The villagers' attitude towards children is indeed a mixed one, regarding them both as supernumerary entities as well as a sub-adult. A child is an economic asset as well as a social nuisance. It was shown in Chapter I how the child is continuously expected to take over from the adult the tasks which it is capable of performing as a part of its acquisition of discipline—'adab'. On the level of social action, however, it is supposed to be insignificant and to have no opinion of its own. On the whole, a son or a daughter, whether young or old, cannot replace the parent in performing formal social obligations; for example, taking gifts to circumcision and wedding ceremonies or entertaining a guest, unless there are extenuating circumstances which justify it. The child's world is always connected with the female world rather than the grown-up male world. In the ceremonial celebrations, children are usually mixed with women more than with men. If children happened to be in a male gathering, they must keep to their place, and be able to withdraw at the earliest opportunity to play on their own, or to join the female crowd. At this level of social action, the unity of the social sphere between children and grown-ups tends to break. Although the child's life is directed towards aims, responsibilities, and values similar

¹ C. M. Fleming, *Adolescence*, pp. 47-8. See also Abram Kardiner in *The Individual and His Society*, where he emphasizes the emotional meaning of work: 'There is, first, the intrinsic gratification in work as a form of mastery. This must be credited with being a basic gratification. The satisfactions derived from it are common to all forms of mastery. They give the individual a feeling of effectiveness and control' (p. 30).

² Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself*, pp. 133-8.

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

- 858 to those of the adults, he is debarred from adult circles, and adult activities; and grown-ups do not expect their children to express any opinion on matters which are outside their domain. Although they are expected to orientate themselves to the same sphere of life, children are not given any significant role in the social life of the village, apart from their economic role. Until the age of twelve the children are not expected to go to the mosque to say their prayers, and if they go they are allowed to sit in the back row only, and never in the front or the middle. Women and girls, however, do not go to the mosque at all in Silwa, and are not expected to do so. There is no religious sanction for this, however; Islam has enjoined mosque prayers on both sexes. Compared with the Tale child, the social sphere of the Silwa child is more restricted in many respects. In the former society, the social sphere of adults and children is differentiated only in terms of relative capacity. 'Nothing in the universe of adult behaviour is hidden from children, or barred to them. They are actively and responsibly part of the social structure, of the economic system, the ritual and ideological system.'¹ In Silwa, however, although children may know about the happenings and events of the adult world in the social sphere, they are not expected to take an active part, or to show interest in them, unless they are asked to do so. On some occasions the writer heard children who, on enquiring about the guests coming to the house, or the nature of the gifts taken to relatives, or where father was going, were silenced and asked to 'mind their own business'.

- 858 Moreover, the process of 'growing-up' is believed to be affected by the character traits of the parents and close relatives on both the patrilineal and matrilineal side.² The belief is that the virtues and vices of the parents and their family line are transmitted, through heredity, to their offspring. Especially in the case of outstanding physical features or social characteristics, their presence is invariably accounted for by inheritance from ancestors; if not directly inherited from the parents, they could be traced to the grandfather or to the great-grandfather. Trends of character, whether of meanness, hospitality, piety, wickedness, aggression or docility, seem to run in the families. A person who deviates from what is known about his family is referred to as 'a mistake' or 'a slip', whether in praise or blame depending on the context. One hears sayings and phrases to the effect that 'so-and-so by nature is good or bad'; 'his roots are rotten'; 'nature prevails over nurture (attaba yaghlib attatbu)'; 'people are of different metals; those who were good in the pre-Islamic period, will be equally good in Islam (annas maadin), Khiyaruhum fi al-Jahiliya, khiyaruhum fi al-Islam'.

- 861 It must be pointed out here that the process of socialization which is strongly felt during childhood and adolescence is not only conducted through the agency of the family, both conjugal and extended, but also

¹ M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Talsland*, p. 9.

² See Chapter IV, concerning the child's character traits.

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Little girls have a perfectly free life until they reach marriageable age, when their freedom is somewhat more restricted. After marriage they are still more secluded, but the degree of seclusion varies, being rather stricter among the better-class peasants than among those of lower social status. Among the latter there may be considerable freedom of intercourse between the sexes. It must be remembered that there are quite definite social grades among the *fellāhīn*, the lines of demarcation being very strongly em-

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[482]

FIG. 14. A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN

phasized. For instance, in a family well known to me the women are not allowed to speak freely to the men, and, with the exception of the elderly mother, none of the females are allowed to enter a room in which male visitors may be seated, and even the mother does not appear unless there is something which renders her presence necessary. One of the women in this family is a widow of about thirty years of age, possibly a little older, and her brother objects to her even being seen walking in the streets of their village, except when she goes, accompanied by her mother, to get the water for household use or for some other necessary purpose. He told me that if he allowed her to be seen walking about in public

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THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organized* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *kādi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

14.

Treasures.

539*

The children are not alone objects of care to their [858] parents, but are also their dearest treasures.

A little urchin speaks to his elder brother:

*Ya ḥāi, ḥudni fi-gēbak,
 'arnē fūl aḥḍar.
 Leḥne 'izaze,
 we-leḥne bēda nikkassar.
 5 Deḥne ḥawātim dahab
 nithattē fil-ḥanṣar.*

O brother, put me in thy pocket,
 Like a fresh bean-pod.
 We are not like glass,
 Nor like fragile eggs,
 5 But rather, we are gold rings,
 To be worn on the little finger.

1. Properly speaking, the peasant has not a pocket, but a [291] pouch on his breast, formed by belting in his garment.

2. The fresh young pods of the fūl (hog's bean) are regarded by the children as a great dainty. Compare No. 4, [262] note on l. 11.

3. A ring is about the only ornament of the fellah, but [301] he is fond of having it seen.

63.

Good Wishes.

- * 539 A little girl is addressed, who, according to Maḥmūd, is
● 858 still so small, that she is compared with "goslings which are
still green (aḥḍar)". Compare No. 64. Fortune shall so favor
the little one, that she shall some day eat with a golden spoon
from a silver dish.

*Alla ye'ēnik, ya uzēzet Ragab;
wiṭ-ṭištē fahḍa, wil-ma'ali' dahāb.*

[415] Allah help thee, O Ragab's gosling!
May thy dish be of silver, the spoons of gold!

- [551] 1. According to Maḥmūd, Ragab is the name of the child's
father.

64.

Dreams of the Future.

For explanation of the manner of address compare with the preceding song. Here prosperity is wished the little one, and a fine tatooing — the pride of a pretty girl — is promised her. Girls are usually tatooed at the age of five or six.

In the country almost all the women are tatooed; most frequently on the front part of the chin and on the lip, but also on the forehead, breast, backs of the hands and on the feet. The designs are pricked in with needles and blue or green coloring matter rubbed in. Compare Nos. 114 and 126.

Alla yē'ēnik, ya uzēz el-Yaman!
win 'amet el-wizze we-'amet sa'diha,
ladu" lil-wizze 'ala ka'biha.

Allah help thee, gosling of Yemen!

And when the goose has grown up and her fortune
 has grown too,

Then I will tatoo the goose upon her wrists and
 ankles.

1. Yemen = Arabia Felix, Araby the Blest.

2. Upon Maḥmūd's explanation of 'amet sa'diha I was strongly reminded of: "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men". Added to this were riches of course.

THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE FEAST.

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than the Friday's ceremony. This day's breakfast¹ the first for a month, consists, if possible, of fresh or salted fish, with all kinds of fruits and delicacies, in order that the body may be gradually accustomed to its usual course of life. People appear in their holiday clothes, and the shops are shut. On this day shirts covered with a year's dirt are exchanged for brand-new garments even among the poorest, gay silken stuffs infold those parts and members of the body that were previously exposed, costly cloths flutter round the head, and the cheerful colours of the bright red, bright yellow, green, and blue coats show vividly in the morning sun. The little girls, who are allowed to run about the streets and markets only on rare occasions, on this day flutter about like brilliant butterflies through the whole town, in their fire-red clothes, their faces carefully painted and touched up, and their persons hung with ornaments of gold and silver. A nameless joy beams in and from out the heart of everybody. No longer is there any enemy, any hateful unbeliever; high and low are all one, the whole citizens embrace each other—liberty, equality, fraternity. A round of visits is made from house to house; officials and people of the higher ranks give a very imposing reception, and everybody wishes everybody else a happy new year, though the new year will not come for three months yet. After the visitor has embraced his host round the neck, bending over his right and his left shoulder, coffee, and sherbet are brought, or the half-fermented native beer made from barley, and called *buza*. Everybody serving another in any capacity on this day receives from his master a money present or at least a new garment. The women also adorn themselves and hold receptions for each other, but this is done to a greater extent on the following day, as they have too much to do on the first day in preparing liquors for the male guests. Any other kind of work is out of the question. The remaining portion of such holidays passes quietly, the chief times of the day being proclaimed by the reports of a cannon as well as by the muezzin. As early, however, as the second day of the feast some persons who are eager after business open their shops and buy and sell;

¹ [i.e., following the fast of Ramadan—Analys]

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